

# Memo to Reagan Linked Israel to Contra Arsenal

WASHINGTON, Jan. 8 — President Reagan was told by his advisers last September that American intelligence had detected Israeli arms shipments to the Nicaraguan rebels, according to Congressional and Administration sources who have seen a White House memorandum on the subject.

The subject arose on the eve of a meeting between Mr. Reagan and Shimon Peres, then Prime Minister of Israel, the sources said.

According to these sources, the aides recommended that the President thank Mr. Peres if the subject was raised. It was unclear whether the issue actually came up in the meeting.

Several Congressional and Administration officials argued that if a message of thanks were offered, it would have served as an unmistakable signal to the Israelis to continue supporting the contras, whether by shipping weapons bought from the United States or by sending arms made in Israel.

## Israelis Deny Shipments

In recent years, Israeli officials have emphatically denied they were shipping weapons to the rebels. Today the Israelis reiterated their denials and said the matter had not been mentioned in the Peres-Reagan session.

An Administration official who confirmed the existence of the memo asserted that any comments by the President on Israeli aid to the contras were intended only to be "reactive." Mr. Reagan "was not in the posture of soliciting arms," the official added.

The memo was written at a time when Congress had prohibited United States officials from providing or soliciting direct or indirect military assistance to the contras. Several Administration officials have contended that these restrictions did not apply to the President or his National Security Council staff.

Ehud Gol, a spokesman for the Israeli Foreign Ministry, issued a statement tonight in the name of the ministry saying: "We can only reiterate our previous unequivocal denial. Israel has not sold, delivered or transferred arms to the Nicaraguan contras. The subject never came up in the conversation between President Reagan and then-Prime Minister Peres."

By **STEPHEN ENGELBERG**

Special to The New York Times

## Memo Prepared for Briefing

The memo was prepared by the White House staff to brief Mr. Reagan before a 60-minute meeting on Sept. 15. An Administration official said there was no indication that the briefing had been given to the President. But a Congressional official said a copy of the document included a notation in the handwriting of Vice Adm. John M. Poindexter, then the President's national security adviser, that the briefing had been "accomplished."

Donald T. Regan, the White House chief of staff, told Congressional investigators last month that he had attended part of the meeting with Mr. Peres but that the subject mentioned in the briefing memo had not been raised while he was in the room, officials said.

A Congressional source who has seen the memo said it alluded to an intelligence report on an Israeli arms shipment to the contras, although it did not specify what sort of arms had been involved. The Administration official said it also told the President about the Israeli position on the issue and stated that Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin favored shipments to the contras.

The disclosure of the memo comes amid indications that Israel may have played a larger role than initially reported in the shipment of weapons to Iran. Another document that was initially included in a draft of a Senate Intelligence Committee report, and later deleted at the request of the State Department, was a letter from Mr. Peres to Mr. Reagan in April 1986 urging continuation of the arms sales.

## Discussion of Humanitarian Aid

Another memo obtained by the Senate committee in its investigation illustrates the importance the Administration attached to raising money for the contras. It describes a meeting about a year ago in which President Reagan, Vice President Bush, Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger and Attorney General Edwin Meese 3d discussed which countries should be contacted for humanitarian aid to the contras.

The legislation in place at the time permitted the State Department to solicit humanitarian aid for the rebels. One result of this provision was a \$10 million contribution to the contras by the Sultan of Brunei.

As of October 1985, Congress had forbidden the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Department or any other agency involved in intelligence activities to "provide funds, material or other assistance" to the contras.

In the conference committee report on the intelligence authorization bill for 1986, Congress added that the law allowing humanitarian aid "does not permit the departments, agencies and entities described therein to engage in the solicitation of third countries to provide funds, material or other assistance to the Nicaraguan democratic resistance."

Mr. Regan and Robert C. McFarlane, a former national security adviser, have told Congress that the Administration policy was to apply this restriction to everyone, including the National Security Council staff.

Other Administration officials directly involved with Central America policy said this week that some National Security Council aides interpreted the restrictions as applying only to the intelligence agencies, and not to the President and his staff.

Congressional officials contend that the restrictions apply to the National Security Council, which is defined in various executive orders as a body involved in intelligence activities.